

Allowed Claims:

1. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A computer-readable storage medium having computer-executable modules stored thereon, the modules respectively configuring a computer to perform acts comprising:

configuring a file locator, ~~configured~~ to locate an executable image on a computer media;

configuring a file-format recognizer, ~~configured~~ to recognize ~~[[the]]~~ a file format of the executable image from amongst a database of multiple file format definitions, wherein the database is extensible so that additional file format definitions may be added to the database of multiple file format definitions;

configuring a memory-mapper, ~~configured~~ to open the executable image from the computer media and read it into a computer memory;

configuring an importer, ~~configured~~ to find a list of executable image names to load;

configuring an exporter, ~~configured~~ to build a representation of program modules that an executable image exports;

configuring a binder, ~~configured~~ to link multiple executable images together, such images being those of the list of executable image names.

2. (CANCELED)

3. **(PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED)** A computer-readable storage_medium as recited in claim 1, wherein the importer is further configured to direct the loading of multiple executable images of the list of executable image names to load

4. **(CURRENTLY AMENDED)** A computer-readable storage medium as recited in claim 1, wherein the file-format recognizer is further configured to select one or more of a group of available pluggable sub-loaders [[is]] capable of loading the recognized file format of the executable image.

5. **(PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED)** A loader comprising a computer-readable storage medium as recited in claim 1.

6. **(PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED)** An operating system comprising a computer-readable storage medium as recited in claim 1.

7. **(PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED)** A computer comprising a computer-readable storage medium as recited in claim 1.

8. **(CURRENTLY AMENDED)** A computer-readable storage medium having computer-executable modules stored thereon, the modules respectively configuring a computer to perform acts comprising:

configuring a searcher, ~~configured~~ to search a computer media for an executable image for loading;

configuring a format[[,]] recognizer ~~configured~~ to recognize [[the]] a format of the executable image;

configuring a memory-mapper, ~~configured~~ to load and map the executable image into memory based upon the format of the executable image;

configuring a sub-loader, ~~configured~~ to examine a data structure of the executable image to determine whether to load additional images;

configuring a database of multiple executable-image formats which is the basis for which the format recognizer recognizes the format of the executable image and for which the memory-mapper varies how it loads and maps the executable image into memory, wherein the database is extensible so that additional executable-image formats may be recognized by the format recognizer and loaded and mapped by the memory-mapper.

9. (CANCELED)

10. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A computer-readable storage medium as recited in claim 8, wherein one or more modules of the medium are configured to be replaced with a replacement module without recompilation of one or more modules.

11. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A computer-readable storage medium as recited in claim 8, wherein the memory-mapper is further configured to convert the executable image before mapping it into the memory.

12. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A computer-readable storage medium as recited in claim 8, wherein the memory-mapper is further configured to decrypt the executable image before mapping it into the memory.

13. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A loader comprising a computer-readable storage medium as recited in claim 8.

14. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) An operating system comprising a computer-readable storage medium as recited in claim 8.

15. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A computer comprising a computer-readable storage medium as recited in claim 8.

16-23. (CANCELED)

24. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A computer implemented method facilitating loading of one or more executable images of varying formats, the method comprising:

locating an executable image on a computer-readable storage media;
investigating information related to the executable image, thereby identifying the format of the executable image, wherein:

during the investigating, accessing an extensible database of executable-image formats; and

the investigating accesses a header of the executable image in order to identify the format;

initiating an extensible loader associated with the identified format, wherein the extensible loader:

is pointed to by an entry; and

comprises a plurality of modules that are selectively combined to accommodate executable image formats not supported by the native operating system, each module including at least one component designed for a specific executable image format;

loading the executable image into a computer memory using the extensible loader, wherein the loading comprises:

calling an entry point located in loaded program libraries in order to load the executable image;

creating a new process based on the entry point;

creating necessary sections within the loaded program libraries for the executable image;

creating an initial thread for the executable image; and

handing over control from the extensible loader to the initial thread in order to execute the executable image.

25. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A computer-readable storage medium storing instructions that, when executed, configure a computer to perform the method of claim 24.

26. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A computer comprising a processor configured to perform the method of claim 24.